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Bet You Missed It

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths
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CD-ROMs: "A Flawed Stopgap"?
by **Rosann Bazirjian**
(Syracuse University))

The author of this article says that CD-ROMs are less popular then we think, and that in reality the CD-ROM craze is sustained by hopeful "venture capital and giveaway products" rather then by consumer demand. **Ms. Losee** indicates that the top CD-ROM products are games, and beneath that tier we see hundreds of "second-rate" products fighting to peek non-existent consumer interest. The author compares this to the introduction of audio compact disks, which forced consumers to discard their vinyl records for a medium which is more costly and cannot even be used for recording. She compares this to PC consumers today who buy computers already equipped with CD-ROM drives because that is what the manufacturers are selling. The article continues with a full explanation of the seven myths about CD-ROMs which every consumer should know: the CD-ROM market is huge; consumer interest fuels CD-ROM market growth; bundling CD-ROMs with computers will spur consumers to buy more; you can buy a multimedia PC and enjoy all the latest CD-ROMs; the CD-ROM market will eventually grow enough to make companies' investments pay; consumer titles account for the bulk of revenues in the CD-ROM market. We have seen the future, and its name is CD-ROM. The author discusses each of the myths in great detail, and this is interesting reading for anyone involved with CD-ROMs, and aren't we all?

See - "Watch Out for the CD-ROM Hype," by **Stephanie Losee** in **Fortune**, vol. 130, (6) (September 19, 1994), p. 127-143.

Silicon Brain: The Real Thing
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Neuroscientists and artificial intelligence (AI) researchers are starting to collaborate after three decades of mutual distrust. Traditionally AI researchers focused on abstract principles such as mathematical reasoning while neuroscientists concentrated on the anatomy and biochemistry of brain function. Software which simulates brain hardware, called **artificial neural networks** (ANNs) have made great strides in duplicating some of the human brain's function, but overall cannot compare with the organic equivalent. Researchers interested in building better ANNs have begun working closely with neuroscientists. **Oxford University** neuroscientists **Douglas** and **Mahowald** are working on silicon neural chips which rely on analog rather than digital signals used by ordinary computer chips, and are trying to combine them into neural networks with the hope that someday a silicon brain may rival the real thing.

See - "A Romance Blossoms Between Gray Matter and Silicon," by **David H. Freedman** in **Science**, vol. 265, August 12, 1994, p. 889-890.

Censorship and the Campus Computer Network
by **Joan Loslo**
(U. of Northern Iowa)

Carnegie Mellon University drew criticism from faculty and students recently when officials there decided to pull the plug on those areas of the computer system that carried discussion or depictions of sex. The administration's attention was focused on pornography on computer networks by a study conducted by one of its research associates. The resulting fear of prosecution and bad publicity caused the decision to limit access, resulting in a campus "Protest for Freedom in Cyberspace".

The **American Civil Liberties Union** pointed out that, while pictures are sometimes found to be obscene, words aren't. The CMU ban was overly broad in restricting both. Latest indications were that the university would back down. However, the problem at CMU is reflected in other academic institutions. Unless computer users practice more discretion in this area, further limitations will undoubtedly be suggested and imposed.

See - "Censoring Cyberspace," by **Philip Elmer-Dewitt** in **Time**, November 21, 1994.

Guiding Principles
by **Rosann Bazirjian**
(Syracuse University))

This article summarizes the ideas that society has incorporated from major high-tech companies such as Intel, Microsoft, Genentech and Silicon Graphics as to how to properly run a business. The author discusses some of the more "useful and provocative precepts" from major industry. They are: organize work around tasks, and realize that reorganization is constant; promote email and other forms of electronic communication; break a company into small teams in order to effectively work on projects; cultivate the most demanding customer — by satisfying the most demanding customer you can be assured of success; don't make critical decisions until you really have to — long-range planning is not always desirable; glorify the people who create the product, such as product engineers; practice "coopetition" — or, cooperate with your hated rivals for markets; help your people become famous experts in their fields; foster an egalitarian culture by breaking down barriers that discourage communication; look to profit by selling a unique service; eat your own lunch before someone else does; spread information widely through the ranks — to give a feeling they are respected and valued; accelerate; abandon the idea that salaries and status should depend on age; and, institute a policy of frequent sabbaticals to avoid burnout. As I read over the precepts it became clear that libraries as businesses are following many of these ideas. This is a worthwhile article to read and attempt to apply to your own institution.

See - "The Managing Wisdom of High-Tech Superstars," by **Alan Deutschman** in **Fortune**, vol. 130 (8) (October 17, 1994), p. 197-206.

Just How Universal is this Service?
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

The concept of "universal telecommunications service" was developed by legislators earlier in this century to apply to what was then a monopoly on provision of telephone connections. It means subsidizing some telecom services that are socially desirable -- e.g. phone service to the deaf -- by charging more for other services -- e.g. speed dialing or call waiting. The author of this article, **John Browning**, believes that the ideal of "universal service" is outmoded in today's decentralized communications environment, and that attempts to structure the provision of network services in the same way could derail the entire information economy. Existing "universal service" regulations work against another popular goal -- free market competition in telecommunications. Browning espouses an alternative: "open access". He favors the focusing of regulatory efforts on mandating "open access" thus protecting the public's ability to decide for themselves what services they want and how much they are willing to pay for them. This requires legislators to intervene to ensure that all competitors, no matter how large or small, have equal access to the telecom infrastructure.

The public's expectations have been raised by the current administration's high-profile promotion of an information superhighway. Legislators have three options for meeting these expectations: expanding subsidies, mandating services, and promoting competition. There is a proposal currently under consideration to create a single fund into which network service providers would pay fees -- this money then to be used to subsidize essential services. The author sees four problems with this idea: deciding who gets subsidized, monitoring the subsidies, deciding which services are "essential" and deciding who pays into the fund and how much.

While the "universal service" ideal was predicated on the scarcity of telecommunications networks, that scarcity is giving way to a variety of network options: telephone, cable tv, electric power lines, and wireless. This basic change from scarcity to bounty requires a shift from regulation based on universal service to regulation based on access. Access regulation would require all network service providers to make these services (and the technology underlying them) available to everybody without discrimination. Thus, existing telecom giants could not use their monopoly on infrastructure to squeeze out competitors, and customers would be able to mix and match services from various companies to get the services they want.

Some access regulations have already been written into legislation -- most notably the **Markey-Fields bill** passed by the U.S. House in June 1994. These require big companies to give competitors access to their networks and to expand the capacity of those networks as needed. Browning suggests that the government could then subsidize the cost of access for customers who can't afford to pay for network services -- the poor, non-profits, etc. He argues that the current cross-subsidy system of providing universal service constitutes a wasteful tax that hides the real cost of building network services. Forcing infrastructure owners to allow open access to their telecommunications systems will insure the maximum choice and competition in the information industry.

See - "Universal Service (An Idea Whose Time Is Past)," in **Wired**, Sept. 1994, p. 102.

Virtual Machine
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Technological changes are occurring that may expand computational power to provide access to what appears to be a single powerful virtual machine, but is in reality a collection of disparate machines that will automatically schedule application components, manage data transfer, and provide communication and synchronization to dramatically improve performance. The details of machine type, physical location, competing users and data representation will all be transparent to the user.

See - "Enterprise-Wide Computing," in **Science**, vol. 265, August 12, 1994, p. 892-893.

NCSA, in a Nutshell
by **Pamela Rose**
(State University of New York at Buffalo)

The technology underlying the **National Center for Supercomputing Applications** (NCSA) **Mosaic** and the **World Wide Web** (WWW) is described in this article, including historical predecessors (**Gopher** and **WAIS**), current protocols with examples, future directions and research systems with different architectures. The popularity of the software is discussed with the goal of illuminating successful services for the **NII** (National Information Infrastructure)

See - "NCSA Mosaic and the World Wide Web: Global Hypermedia Protocols for the Internet," by **Bruce R. Schatz** and **Joseph B. Hardin** in **Science**, vol. 265, August 12, 1994, p. 895-901.

The Risky Side of Life
by **Marie Swearingen**
(Syracuse University)

It's been said, "the only regrets one has in life are the risks not taken." Can taking risks in the work-place make one's work more interesting, exciting and/or more productive? Let's take it one step further . . . can it make the work of the team more exciting? What benefits can one realize? One of the first noticeable benefits of risk-taking at the office is your own increased alertness and self-awareness . . . it keeps you in the proverbial work game AND, we hope, one jump ahead of your opponent. But for your team to be just as courageous as you . . . DELEGATE — Give each player of the game the opportunity to be a star . . . let their light shine for others to see. EDUCATE — The more your entire team knows and understands the entire strategy and purpose of the game — not just their specific position — the more confident they feel the risk is worth taking. Provide ways for everyone to sharpen their communication skills, teach people skills, cross-train. And, mistakes happen . . . oh well! CALCULATE — Brainstorm the result possibilities, both pro and con. Anticipate when to walk versus when to run. ENCOURAGE — Ask your team members how they would solve a problem. Be respectful of all ideas and provide feedback on why an idea might not be the best one for implementation. Is your work-force regretting a risk not taken because of the comfort and security of the routine? Did your opponent score more runs based on THEIR gutsy calls?

See - "Encouraging a Risk-Taking Culture," in **Supervisory Management**, August, 1994, p. 1.

Never-Ending Quarrel
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

Richard Abel compares two long-unsolved problems between booksellers and publishers to Zeno's arrow which never reaches its target. These problems are: 1) the return of books by booksellers for full credit; 2) the discount offered to booksellers by publishers. Why do these disputes exist? Because neither publishers nor booksellers know for whom books are published and for whom they are to be sold, especially in the areas of mass-market paperbacks and trade books. To understand why the issues can't be determined it is also necessary to separate them into two categories: entertaining (fiction and non-fiction) books; and all other books. The latter are for small markets of identifiable buyers. The former are widely unpredictable. Adding to the uncertainty is the quest for bestsellers. The result: booksellers accuse publishers and publishers accuse booksellers. Thus the quarrels remain unresolved.

See - "Zeno's Arrow: Or the Reason the Oft-Described Distribution Problem of the Book Trade Remains Insoluble," by **Richard Abel** in **Publishing Research Quarterly**, Winter, 1993-94, p 66-73.

The Driving Force
by **Rosann Bazirjian**
(Syracuse University)

This article focuses on the home consumer of personal computers. 1994 is being described as a "landmark" year for the purchase of PCs for personal use. For example, in 1994, for the first time, as many PCs will be sold to U.S. homes as to businesses. According to **Link Resources** in New York City, consumers will pay $8 billion to buy 6.6 million PCs. In addition, they will spend 3.4 billion on software. The combined total is more than consumers will spend on televisions. Among the competitors, **Compaq** is at the top of the list due to the strength of its **Presario** consumer line. **Packard Bell** has pushed **IBM** out of the top three. The article continues to describe the force of consumer computing saying it will reshape the industry in four ways: the big will get bigger; Microsoft and Intel will maintain their roles, but "buttress" their hold on the market; building a strong brand image will become more important; and, new players will emerge. The article continues on for many more pages with predictions for the future in terms of software needs and computer sales. This is worthwhile reading.

See - "What's Driving the New PC Stakeout," by **David Kirkpatrick** in **Fortune**, vol. 130 (6) (September 19, 1994), p. 109-122.

New Things In Store for New York Public
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

The New York Public Library is building the nation's largest, public $100 million Science, Industry and Business Library equipped with 100 computer workstations linked to dozens of databases as well as the Internet, with additional computers for training, hookups for laptops and remote telephone access.

See - "Library On-Line in New York," in the Random Samples Section, edited by **Constance Holden** of **Science**, vol. 265 (September 2, 1994), p. 1359.

Sexual Politics
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

An interesting account of the methods used by Alfred Knopf Incorporated to publicize **The Second Sex** by **Simone de Beauvoir** when they published it in the U.S. in 1953. Although the title was originally rejected by Knopf, several factors including sales figures caused the firm to reconsider. Marketing strategy was very carefully planned to emphasize scientific merit with comparison to Kinsey and to de-emphasize the existential and feminist philosophy. De Beauvoir's lack of interest in the translation and her subsequent "carte blanche" to the translator allowed textual cuts to make the work more appealing to the buying public. As we all know the book was immensely successful. De Beauvoir, however, notified Knopf that she would not publish with them again.

See - "A Dignified Success: Knopf's Translation and Promotion of The Second Sex," by **Sheryl A. England** in **Publishing Research Quarterly**, Summer 1994, p. 5-18.

Release the Power
by **Marie Swearingen**
(Syracuse University)

By definition, empowerment unleashes the inherent power within each of us to make a difference. Delegation is acting on someone else's behalf. When comparing, delegation is neither enabling an individual to possess the power or authority necessary to make and carry out decisions, nor is it constant. It can be taken away just as easily as it was given. Empowering can cultivate one's creative contributory potential to the work environment. How does a manager "let go"? — UNCONDITIONALLY TRUSTING his or her staff members. Then, be courageous . . . do not violate this trust by expecting YOUR own ideas to be adopted. Can you think of a better way of eliminating the flow of creative juices in your staff members if trust is not given? Empowering your employees can result in high morale, high productivity, and success not only for your company but all persons involved.

See - "Don't Delegate — Empower," by **Richard Boren** in **Supervisory Management**, October, 1994, p. 10.

Some Paper-less Society
by **Sarah Tusa**
(Lamar University)

Paper prices approach premium status as a world-wide shortage increases demand for "every grade of printing and writing paper." The paper industry has risen from a severe slump that began in 1990, and publishers, as well as other paper-dependent industries, are already feeling the pinch. Buyers are building inventories in order to avoid further price increases that are expected to be as much as 25%. The article explains that a rise in demand for linerboard (used to make corrugated boxes) sparked the upswing after tighter times had caused some manufacturers to shut down temporarily, leaving a supply shortage. The paper industry needs this turnaround in order to pay off debts incurred earlier in this decade, and is warned against "its penchant for overinvesting as profits grow." Otherwise, the market is predicted to remain tight for two or three years, barring a recession.

See - **Business Week**, No. 3399, November 21, 1994.

Create Your Own Book
by **Philip Dankert**
(Cornell University)

Can the book "turn back a challenge from the computer in the battle for supremacy in college classrooms"? More than one individual thinks so. The answer lies in the creation of custom textbooks. In fact people in the textbook industry state that interest has grown quickly since the first ones came on the scene four years ago. The underlying concept here is that text are produced quickly and to the specifications of individual professors. One of the first to enter this market was **Primis**, a division of **McGraw-Hill**. "The company now has several hundred thousand pages of material in a database for custom publishing, including book chapters and articles published by the company, materials found by others who have granted permission for their use and documents in the public domain." Other publishers involved in this type of enterprise include **Addison-Wesley**, **Harcourt Brace** and **Prentice-Hall**.

Professors who have developed these custom books comment that the speed with which they are being produced makes them more comparable to photocopied course packs than to the traditional textbook. Others feel strongly that they are superior in quality to the photocopied anthology because they are neatly printed in one format with high quality graphics. And, due largely to the **Kinko**'s case, many faculty members state that they are "more comfortable with going to a publisher and arranging for a custom book than they would be with asking a photocopy shop to assemble a course pack." If there is a possible drawback it is related to the price. These books are not cheap; they are often priced at $30.00 or more. Factors here are number of pages as well as costs that copyright holders charge for reproducing their articles.

Robert D. Lynch, a vice-president of **McGraw-Hill** and director of **Primis**, says "he views custom publishing as an intermediate point on the move from traditional textbooks to electronic services." He believes that in five years from now there will be a different model for the delivery of information. Others, however, believe that these custom books will be here for the foreseeable future. **Gary F. Shapiro**, deputy executive director of the **National Association of College Stores** comments that "we're moving from one format to a whole bunch of formats. What we're going to see is that the monopoly of the traditional textbook is over."

See - "Textbooks on Demand," by **Thomas J. DeLoughry** in **The Chronicle of Higher Education**, October 12, 1994, p. A19, A21.

IBM on the Rebound
by **Rosann Bazirjian**
(Syracuse University)

This article provides an interesting profile of **IBM CEO Lou Gerstner**. Although IBM still lags behind **Compaq** Computer and **Hewlett-Packard**, Mr. Gerstner is credited with stabilizing IBM's profit margins and restoring IBM to profitability. In an effort to reduce expenses in order to become profitable, IBM has cut $4.8 billion, which is approximately 20% of their total expenses. Now that IBM is stabilizing, Gerstner plans to tackle more long-term issues. The article then continues to profile Gerstner, the businessman, and documents the history of IBM's troubles from the mid-1980's until Gerstner took over. This is an informative article which should appeal to anyone interested in IBM's future.

See - "Is He Too Cautious to Save IBM?" by **Stratford Sherman** in **Fortune**, vol. 130 (7) (October 3, 1994), p. 78-90.

Internet Library
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Picture a vast used book store with volumes overflowing onto the floor, and new volumes being added helter-skelter to the piles. A browser's delight, but a librarian's nightmare in terms of retrieval! The digitizing of a vast amount of information has proceeded much faster than the ability to access it intelligently. Some relief in the form of **Mosaic** has helped; however, it is not enough. **University of Michigan**'s **Dan Atkins** recommends transforming the Internet into one or several "digital libraries" complete with electronically ordered shelves, a catalog and a helpful staff. The **National Science Foundation**, together with the **Advanced Research Projects Agency** and **NASA** is working toward that end by awarding $24.4 million in grants to develop such systems. Currently funded projects include **Carnegie Mellon**, **University of California, Berkeley**, **University of Michigan**, **University of California, Santa Barbara**, **Stanford** and the **University of Illinois**. In addition to developing innovative strategies to retrieve incredibly vast amounts of information quickly and manage graphic image retrieval, such systems will also offer a way, for the first time, for users to play an active role in offering output.

See - "Turning an Info-Glut into a Library," by **Robert Pool** in **Science**, vol. 266 (October 6, 1994), p. 20-22.

Japanese Networks
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Japanese scientists often find it easier to access information from halfway around the world than halfway across town due to the fragmented nature of existing Japanese networks. Signs of improvement are visible through efforts to allow scattered elements to converse with each other, with networks like **SINET** which links LAN's at 188 Japanese university institutes. Internet connections are increasing rapidly as well, and networks like **GenomeNet** stand as a model to encourage Japanese scientists to push for increased software development to keep pace with the dollars spent for supercomputers and hardware.

See - "Japan Aims to Link islands of Science Information," by **Lori Valigra** in **Science** vol. 266 (November 18, 1994), p. 1172.

Future Federation
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Unlike the genome community, where no two major databases are alike, the neuroscience informatics community is working toward a cooperative creation of multiple, independent databases with commonality of syntax and semantics, allowing any number to be viewed simultaneously. This is called "**Federation**," the goal to be addressed at the next workshop, **Database Development in Brain and Behavior**, to take place in San Antonio. Federation offers the greatest potential for scientific exploitation of the Internet.

See - "Neuroscience on the Net," by **Peter T. Fox** and **Jack L. Lancaster** in **Science**, vol. 266 (November 11, 1994), p. 994-996.